

RADICALIZATION AS A PROCESS OF TERRORIST RECRUITMENT

Review Article

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Abstract: There are different views and opinions about the radicalization process itself. Radicalism can be seen as a desire for change in society, which do not have to take place forcibly, but on the basis of the persistence of individuals or groups. In the security discourse, radicalization is mostly discussed in a negative context and has a negative connotation, that is, as a long-term process through which a socially useful person becomes a terrorist, that is, a danger to the state and the social community. The aim of this paper is to point out the causes that lead to radicalization, but also the stages of the radicalization process. People who are exposed to this process show, through their attitudes and behavior, that they are different from the community where they live, it is recognized that they have become different. Such persons accept certain political, religious and separatist goals and emphasize violence as the only way to achieve these goals.

Keywords: radicalism, terrorism, extreme, radicalization, threat, endangerment.

INTRODUCTION

Regarding terrorism, we often put radicalization aside, which is a big shortcoming in perceiving this security threat and suppressing it. Organizations, institutions and experts have not defined the appearance of a potential terrorist, that is, the characteristics of a terrorist. By accepting certain radical attitudes, ideologies and goals and by undergoing a certain process, a person becomes radical and ready for a terrorist act. This process is called radicalization. There are different opinions on radicalism. History is full of examples of movements that fought for change, guided by the desire for the good of the country and society, but here the question of methodology arises. If the chosen

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methods exclude violence and are based on political struggle, we cannot talk about radicalization. There is no profile of a person for whom we can confidently say that he/she can become a terrorist. What may indicate a problem is a change in behavior and attitudes. This paper attempts to point out the causes of radicalization, that is, the factors influencing a person to become radical. Regarding the causes, this is, by no means, a simple question. We will attempt to explain the reasons for this in the remainder of this paper. What is certain is that there is always a symbiosis of several factors, from internal to external ones. The most important thing is to pay attention to the causes, because only in this way can the creation of terrorists be prevented, that is, we prevent radicalization, which is the basis for creating extremists who can become terrorists. If we do not prevent this through preventive measures, then the only thing left for us is repression. We need to know that in this case, society and the state may face greater dangers and consequences. The causes can range from political, economic, social to psychological ones. The wide range of causes is the reason why we act preventively in these spheres of society. It is necessary to create better living conditions and thus prevent radicalization or at least reduce it to a certain extent. Undoubtedly, there are causes we cannot influence, but there are also those that we can and must influence. Unfortunately, the implementation of radicalization through certain religious communities and humanitarian organizations is on the scene. That is inadmissible in an organized state, and it should be condemned by the entire society and state institutions. Religious feelings must not be abused; basic religious postulates should bring people together. The work of humanitarian organizations should be in the purpose of the common good and humanitarian workers should not be used as a means for achieving political and ideological goals. The stages of radicalization deserve special attention. It has already been stated that radicalization is a long-term process during which a person radicalizes in stages. This process is neither easy nor simple. It is carried out by people who are experienced and trained, which is an additional reason to take the fight against radicalization as seriously as possible. Throughout this paper, radicalization will be explained and emphasized as a complex long-lasting process, and why it is important in relation to the fight against terrorism. Attention will also be paid to the causes that lead to radicalization, which are a precondition of the fight against radicalization.

RADICALISM AND THE CAUSES OF RADICALIZATION

Terrorism still poses the biggest threat to today's global security. Today, the world is exposed to a large number of security challenges, risks and threats, but we are witnesses that no threat has caused such a need for unity as the fight against terrorism. A large number of terrorism experts point out that the turning point in understanding terrorist threats came after the attack on the Twin Towers. Following this event, terrorism was qualified as a major threat to humanity, and war was literally declared against terrorism. Here a logical question

arises: Why has an offensive against terrorism not been launched before? Can it be concluded that only when the security of great states, and important geopolitical actors is endangered, are we talking about a common fight and threats to global security?

To understand a terrorist threat, we need to look at the evolution of the idea that violence can achieve ideological and political goals. Numerous studies connect the roots of terrorism with the activities of three religious groups: The Zealots – the Sicarii in Judea, the Tagas in India and the Assassins in Persia (Šikman, 2009: 54). A large number of institutional and non-institutional definitions of terrorism tell us how important terrorism and all other processes related to terrorism are. The same can be said for radicalism and extremism, two concepts that correlate with the concept of terrorism. At the same time, in regard to terrorism, it is necessary to touch on and explain the concept of radicalism. Why is it so? A person does not become a terrorist on his/her own initiative, the essence is that a certain person is exposed to the process carried out by certain organizations.

Regarding the fight against terrorism, the priority should be the fight against radicalization that leads to extremism and subsequently to terrorism. Another priority should be the fight against terrorist financing or terrorist organizations.

It is not our intention to link radicalism exclusively to terrorism, because radicalism does not always lead to terrorism. We associate radicalism with radical changes in society, and it is interpreted in two ways: as a return to a former state, which is retrograde or as a total change (which can cause a certain novum²). If we say that something is radical, it does not mean that it is regressive; on the contrary, it can have a progressive meaning (Đorić, 2012). However, we cannot equate radicalism with activism, which is the democratic right of citizens to legally achieve certain social, political, economic, and other goals. Radicalism can lead to certain positive effects, but very often it represents a path to extremism and terrorism.

If extremism were viewed from the aspect of human rights and negative social consequences, then several conclusions could be drawn. Extremism exists in the context of political and wider social violence and is the result of a process of individual and group radicalization. It is a complex social phenomenon, based on the overemphasized biological needs of self-protection from “others” and the xenophobic variant of understanding a certain identity. Behind extremism is a system of beliefs that serves to form and justify violent behaviors aimed at other racial, religious, ethnic and political groups, which are perceived as hostile (Simeunović, 2009).

This indicates that radicalization is a process of change that ends with personal and political transformation from one condition to another. This process neither happens quickly nor easily, but numerous studies claim that distinct

2 Novum – the Latin word for new thing.

and identifiable phases from sympathizers to operatives have been defined. All members of the community among whom the vulnerable are sought occupy the first level are, while the formed group of vulnerable targets occupies the second level. At the third level are those who have developed radical and extreme beliefs, but who have not yet committed a terrorist act. At this level, their role may be to recruit members at lower levels. At the top of the chain are members of terrorist organizations (Christmann, 2012: 10).

Radicalization can be defined as the process of building extremist beliefs, feelings and behaviors, which are contrary to basic social values, democratic principles and universal human rights. These beliefs advocate the supremacy of a particular group based on racial, religious, political, economic, or social affiliation (Trip, Bora, Marian, Halmajan, & Drugas, 2019). Radicalization is a “process in which a person becomes an extremist” (Borum, 2011: 9).

People who will accept the views of radical groups in which it is justified to achieve their goals through violence are sought through radicalization. We often hear the term radical which is not necessarily negative, but when it is associated with terrorism, it is nothing more than the mobilization of potential terrorists. With the development of terrorism, radicalization developed. Currently, the major goal and the way of recruiting potential terrorists is the manipulation of religious feelings. It is not good to generalize this conclusion, but there are examples of abuse of religious feelings and religion in general by individuals and organizations in order to recruit potential terrorists. That is why it is important to look at the motives that can influence certain people to identify with extremists and take the path of terrorism.

The study by the International Research Center for Combating Terrorism in The Hague divides the causes of radicalization that can lead to terrorism are into three levels. The first level occupies the individual, the individual who includes an identity crisis, a sense of alienation, marginalization, discrimination, stigmatization, and rejection, combined with anger and revenge. The second level represents the wider radicalized community that supports terrorism, or it can even be a group that operates in secret and is actually a link to a terrorist organization. This often happens within a social group that is exposed to difficult living conditions, which can be a fertile ground for radicalization. National, ethnic and religious groups that are a minority in a particular country are listed here as vulnerable. The third or macro level refers to the role of government and society in the state and abroad, the radical views of public figures and politicians, especially those living abroad. In the absence of opportunities for a decent socio-economic status, mobilization and radicalization can occur, which can eventually manifest itself through terrorist acts (Schmid, 2013: 10).

Radicalization and the causes of radicalization can be observed through several concepts, and one of them is the concept of political drivers of radicalization. In explaining radicalization some approaches emphasize the political drivers of this process, and in this sense the following are mentioned (USAID, 2017: 6-7): the denial of political rights and civil liberties; severe government

repression and the gross violations of human rights; foreign occupation; political and military interference of other states; endemic corruption and impunity of well-connected elites; isolated regions with low population density; local conflicts and the inability of governments to resolve them; discrediting governments and weak political opposition; intimidation and coercion by extremist groups where government services cannot protect their citizens, the perception that the international system is fundamentally unjust, hostile and discriminatory towards certain societies and peoples; the presence of “proactive” extremist (e.g. religious) programs in the community.

Regarding the reasons why a certain person gets involved in the process of radicalization, they are very complex. It rarely happens that only one cause influences a person, it is always more than one cause which makes one symbiosis. They range from individual, socio-economic, social and psychological ones. There is no exact profile of a terrorist in the scholarly literature, just as there is no clearly defined network of causes of radicalization.

In regard with radicalization in BiH and the recruitment of new terrorists, it is a very complex phenomenon, as is the overall social situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is no security or political issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which can be answered simply. The credit goes to the political environment and the eternal patronage of the international community.

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s society, which is affected by various crises and wars, is an ideal ground for the development of radicalization and the recruitment of terrorists. There are a number of economic, social, political, national and religious problems which affect the population, all of which are conducive to recruiting young people. National and ethnic intolerance is ideal for the development of radicalism and extremism, which is often done through religious communities and NGOs. Since the beginning of the global jihadist movement, ethnic intolerance has been in its focus, and, according to Evan Kohlmann, the war in BiH significantly influenced the spread of the jihadist ideological basis (Kohlmann, 2004). In this sense, three periods of radicalization in BiH are distinguished (Šikman, 2018: 121-124).

The first period: 1992 -1995. This period is characterized by the arrival of foreign terrorist fighters (of Afro-Asian origin) mujahideen in BiH, who took part in many war operations. In fact, BiH was the first country where mujahideen began to come as experienced fighters following the war in Afghanistan (1979-1989) to participate in jihad, some of whom, as members of al-Qaeda, had a goal to conquer a base from which they could continue to operate. Initially, they came on their own initiative, originally from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Yemen (Kolhmann, 2004), and later they came through organizations such as the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA). During 1992, they operated independently, and since mid-1993 as a detachment “El Mujahedin” within the Third Corps, the so-called Army of BiH (Šikman, 2021: 198).

The second period: 1995 - 2012. During this period, radicalization was established and developed among the local population. Specifically, following the

war, the largest number of foreign jihadist fighters were redirected to other battlefields, and a number of them received BiH citizenship and remained in BiH. After that, the first Wahhabi communities were established in isolated, inaccessible villages in which local residents gradually began to arrive (Šikman, 2021).

The third period: from 2012 to present. This period is characterized by citizens of BiH who travelled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIL and participate in terrorist activities. The number of returnees in BiH has not been precisely determined, as well as the data on their activities in BiH. That is why BiH continues to face security challenges posed by its citizens, who publicly glorify the terrorist ideology of ISIL and other activities related to the actions conducted by the followers of radical Salafism (Šikman, 2021).

Regarding radicalism, Bosnia and Herzegovina's major problem is that radicalization is, to some extent, realized through religious communities. Of course, there is a difference between religion as a private matter and religion as a structure of public order, which should guarantee social integration (Abazović, 2007: 88). Religion should unite people and be a force that will move the world into unity, freedom and respect for others. But in practice, religion is often abused for other purposes which deliberately endanger members of other nations and religions. BiH, which has been an unstable region for the last 25 years, has become a suitable terrain for the development of radicalism, which later grows into terrorism.

The thesis that BiH should be a unitary state has been present since 1991, and has never been accepted by the Serbian people. Political views on the need to unitarize the country contribute to ethnic tensions and intolerance, as it is a divided society. The importance of certain non-governmental organizations and the possibilities of their abuse is shown by the fact that in just four years (between 1994 and 1998) the number of foreign humanitarian organizations in BiH increased from 50 to 332, while the number of domestic organizations rose from 130 to 200. They carry out their work by financing various projects, disseminating and abusing religious norms (Sarajlić, 2011).

What is important to point out regarding radicalism is the education system of one country, and as other social spheres in BiH, the education system is faced with huge problems. This is not about the education of the people of BiH, the language of another country, but about the permeation of radicalism under the guise of cultural institutions, which provide education in opposition to the institutional education. An important segment of the network spread of radicalism takes place through school institutions. Today, 1,700 *maktabs* (informal Islamic schools) operate legally in BiH, where classes are conducted in accordance with the curricula under the control of the Islamic Community in BiH (Sarajlić, 2011). Specifically, in addition to legal schools in BiH with Islamic curricula that operate under the administrative authority of BiH, there are a number of schools in which teaching contrary to the positive regulations of BiH

takes place. Examples of such schools are “parajaamats”³ which exist in certain parts of BiH. They clearly speak about the influence of the main networks on the Islamic space in BiH, such as: Arab and neo-Selefian networks, Iranian networks, Turkish networks (Sarajlić, 2011).

When the situation is viewed from the aspect of the socio-economic position of the citizens of BiH, then it is quite clear why BiH has a large number of security challenges posed by its own citizens. One of the easiest ways to attract young people is through money. At the same time, unemployed young people, even with no prospects in their own country, are easily deceived and recruited as mercenaries for other people’s wars, or to get involved in the organization of terrorist acts. Terrorist acts that were found to be related to Islamic fundamentalism took place in BiH.

Young people are most vulnerable to radicalization for several reasons. They are dissatisfied with their position in society, they believe that the state is not doing anything good for them and they want to change that through violence. There is no one-size-fits-all personality that is considered ideal for radicalization. We can say that there are certain social groups: young people aged 20 to 30, originally from rural areas, with poor financial status, unmarried, unemployed, previously convicted, less educated, economically dependent. However, we cannot with certainty rely on the stated predispositions, precisely because terrorist acts committed by persons who do not fit into the stated matrix are evident. That is why it is important for society to suppress the causes that lead to radicalization, ranging from individual, social, state, to global causes.

THE STAGES OF RADICALIZATION

Radicalization is a long-term process, which, from a socially useful person, produces a person who poses a threat to society and the basic values of the state order. Those who enter the process of radicalization are initially unaware of it. They seek comfort and understanding from others because they are personally dissatisfied with their position in society, or because of certain psychological problems. Such persons are potential candidates for radicalization, that is, for those spreading radicalization.

The concept of gradual flow of radicalization

This approach indicates that radicalization takes place gradually through the action of social movements and ideologies that give individuals the meaning

³ Parajaamats (Serbian: paradžemati) are illegal congregations in BiH. Jamaats are the basic organizational units of the Islamic community, in which religious obligations are performed and are under the control of the Islamic Community of BiH. Parajamats are not under the control of the Islamic Community of BiH, they show religious radicalism, intolerance and extremism. In addition, they were found to advocate, recruit extremists, and glorify terrorist actions.

of political reality. Radicalization is thus understood as a process of acquiring an identity that leads to political extremism and the desire to engage in terrorist activities. This process can take place through a group, organization, and through the media. Individuals, who are exposed to political socialization that promotes violent extremism as a means of political struggle, go through phases in which they gradually develop their motives for violent political action. These are four general phases: 1) exposure to a new view of the world, the existence of cognitive openness; 2) the ideological creation of the meaning of the context of the problem and the aspirations of the group to which the individual belongs; 3) encouraging group stories about the history of problems and conflicts, the endangerment of the group, an ethics of struggle, the legitimacy of violent action; 4) joining the group (Jugović and Živaljević, 2021).

The concept of a linear process

This concept served to explain the development of jihadist terrorism among citizens of the Islamic faith living in the Western countries. According to it, radicalization has four phases (Silber, Bhatt, 2007, p. 1): “pre-radicalization” – the time before an individual is exposed to Islamic fundamentalism; 2) “self-identification” – individuals through the study of Salafi Islam accept ideological doctrines and associate with other supporters of Islamic fundamentalism; 3) “indoctrination” – strengthening radicalization through commitment to fundamentalist ideology and its followers; 4) “Jihadization” – the acceptance of jihad practices and fulfillment of personal obligations in violent activities.

The concept of lone wolf

Lone wolf terrorism is a phenomenon known since the 19th century as a part of various anarchist beliefs which advocated the idea of “individual resistance without leadership.” This concept explains the violent extremism and terrorist acts by those people who do not belong to terrorist organizations or groups. These are individuals who commit politically motivated violence, but without a direct connection to like-minded people or organizers of violent extremist groups. These people are self-radicalized and, from the position of the security services, it is difficult to detect and assess them in terms of the degree of motivation and readiness for terrorist acts (Spaaij, 2012).

The radicalization of “lone wolves” is explained as a multifactorial process that includes several risk factors: 1) seeking meaning in self-sacrifice for multiple goals; 2) the moral conviction that “justice” and “revenge” are being carried out by a violent act against an imaginary or real enemy; 3) some psychopathological features of individuals, such as antisocial personality disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, excessively solitary nature of personality; 4) the influence of a dysfunctional family, especially those in which aggressive-paranoid behaviors were present; 5) motivation and emotion-

alization by a certain ideology; 6) the use of the Internet and cyber groups for the development of ideology and independent design of terrorist acts. The 2011 case of a far right extremist Anders Behring Breivik, who killed 69 and wounded 60 teenagers at a summer youth camp in Oslo, is one of the most famous examples of “lone wolf” terrorism in Europe (Bartlett, 2014).

The concept of rejection and attraction factors and contextual factors. This concept explains the influence of three groups of factors on the development of radicalization (Kisić, Barišić and Đukanović, 2019: 11–13).

Push factors refer to negative social, cultural and political characteristics of a particular social environment, such as social exclusion, inequality, poverty, discrimination, limited access to quality education, unemployment, the sense of social injustice, the denial of civil rights and freedoms, the group identity unacceptance, cultural oppression, political discontent.

Pull factors are personal in nature and indicate the positive characteristics and benefits which, for some people, help them gain membership in an extremist organization. These factors include a sense of belonging and importance, close people who are already members of an extremist group, the attractiveness of leaders, spiritual fulfillment, employment, financial aid, adventure, social status, respect for peers, self-confidence and personal empowerment, the sense of prospect, the perception of extremist group as morally correct, building a cult (racial, religious, ethnic, gender) of group supremacy over other communities in society.

The contextual factors refer to government institutions which encourage radicalization, such as repressive actions undertaken by government bodies, human rights violations, dysfunctional administration and public services to citizens, crime and criminal neighborhoods where the police are rarely present, the weakness of the state security apparatus, deep-rooted corruption, undemocratic society, an autocratic concept of rule with the weak or fictitious opposition, and so on.

Based on the above concepts of radicalization and factors influencing radicalization, we conclude that there are several phases in the process of radicalization, which follow and thus close the circle of radicalization, which further leads to extremism and ultimately terrorism. Human psychology is something that is constantly being researched. One of the first phases to be imposed is pre-radicalization. The name itself suggests that the term refers to the time that influences an individual or a group to embark on a path of radicalization, into which they have not yet been seduced.

The pre-radicalization is a phase when a person is dissatisfied with his life and does not know how to deal with numerous problems. These are younger people who search for identity, pursue success – they simply want to find their place in this world.

After this phase, self-identification occurs. It is about the state of a person when he or she finds himself or herself in a difficult situation and tries to iden-

tify with someone or a group of like-minded people. There are simply crises, which can be of different natures: economic, social, social, psychological, political ... All this affects a person to reject his previous views and form new ones leading to extremism and terrorism.

The next phase is the phase of indoctrination, when a person has already accepted new attitudes and entered into a new world. However, it is a world which knows only violence and illegal actions as a means to an end. These people want to change, through violence and the use of force, everything that is not, according to them, good. They come into conflict with family members, friends, and even people who are at a lower level of radicalization. They form their own circle of like-minded people, and everyone else is considered an enemy.

All of the above precedes the action. Indoctrinated persons receive orders and blindly carry them out. They become soldiers of their own groups, who are manipulated by others. Based on the achieved radicalization, they carry out orders, which are mostly acts of violence. Their groups are becoming increasingly cohesive and unique, with a small percentage of betrayal or abandonment of the group itself. In a short period of time these groups become their world. When that happens, they are ready to do everything for their organization, even to commit the most heinous crimes.

CONCLUSION

Creating a terrorist and a terrorist organization is a long process that requires experience, time, money, and political support. There are no clear indicators to show who is and who is not a terrorist, that is, who can become and who cannot become a terrorist. There are examples of terrorists who refuted all theories and of terrorists who had different social status and psycho-physical characteristics. That is why it is necessary to direct social efforts against radicalization, as a process which creates terrorists. The process of radicalization can be triggered by social, or psychological circumstances which directly or indirectly affect the individual. Today, radicalization is not just a security problem because it has long been a complex social problem. A person under the influence of radicalization changes his views, beliefs, opinion. Individuals dissatisfied with their social status and their lives find solace and support in organizations they eventually learn are terrorist organizations. They get their support through employment, money, and organizations get their loyalty and potential terrorists in return. There is a number of factors that help terrorist organizations carry out the process of radicalization. These are primarily personal factors, family factors, social factors. In most cases, there is a symbiosis of several of them.

This process is not as fast as is often thought. Some of the standard signs of a person being radicalized are breaking off relationships with family and long-

time friends, changing views, rejecting authority, anti-social comments, visiting extremist and radical sites, approving violence. There is a wide network of places where the process of radicalization can take place. The Internet has a great influence on young people today, which is an excellent tool for indoctrinating the youth. Social media platforms have increased the influence of extremist and jihadist organizations because they have provided access to a wider audience, that is, a larger number of potential recruits.

An increasing number of organizations are trying to recruit new members in schools, colleges, religious facilities, and prisons. One of the main centers for recruitment and indoctrination are certain mosques. Enclosed places are especially suitable for the process of radicalization, where smaller groups gather and where there is more mutual affirmation of radical beliefs and attitudes and less possibility to verify them. Therefore, in the fight against terrorism, it is necessary to talk about preventing radicalization, because it is the initial trigger in the development of terrorist beliefs in individuals and groups. If we want to fight terrorism, we must prevent radicalization. Special attention should be paid to the causes and factors causing a person to succumb to the pressures of radicalization. In other words, the real question is how to improve the general social situation which will have a positive effect on the consciousness of both the individual and public opinion. One of the basic theories used by terrorists is that society is in chaos.

Special attention should be paid to the process of education because teenagers represent a vulnerable social group subject to the influence of others. In this context, the great influence of the Internet, especially social media platforms, should not be neglected. Of course, the right to freedom of speech is increasingly being abused. Young people participate in various forums which can be a starting point in radicalization. It is also necessary to prevent terrorism financing, that is, to reduce the link between organized criminal groups and terrorists as much as possible. At the same time, it is necessary to point out, the consequences of terrorist activities and ways of manipulating young people. Of course, it is necessary for the academic community and government institutions to get involved in the fight. Based on all of the above, it is clear how important the process of radicalization is in achieving terrorist goals. Therefore, it is necessary for all competent institutions to fight against radicalization, because that is the only way in which society can fight terrorism. Thus, when the process of indoctrination is brought to an end, the fight is reduced to a minimum.

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